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ABSTRACT

"The Shape We're In" is a national public education initiative that places a media spotlight on physical activity and obesity to promote public awareness and spark dialogue and action across the country. The centerpiece is a five-part newspaper series delivered to newspapers nationwide. This community action guide begins by describing how to recruit the local newspaper. The next section, "Media Tools," focuses on: getting started with promotions, national events, creating media coverage, writing a news release, news release template, writing an opinion-editorial, connecting with local radio and television outlets, and pitching local stories. The next section, "Community Activities," includes: 20-percent boost approach to 10,000 steps a day (sample news release), walking school bus (sample pitch for a local story); 1-percent or less campaigns (sample media advisory); walkability checklist (sample opinion-editorial); pedestrian cross walk action (sample public service announcement); trips for kids (sample radio pitch); and pace care programs (sample flyer). The final section, "Support Materials," includes a series summary and upcoming conferences and meetings. (SM)

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THE SHAPE WE'RE IN

Community ACTION Guide

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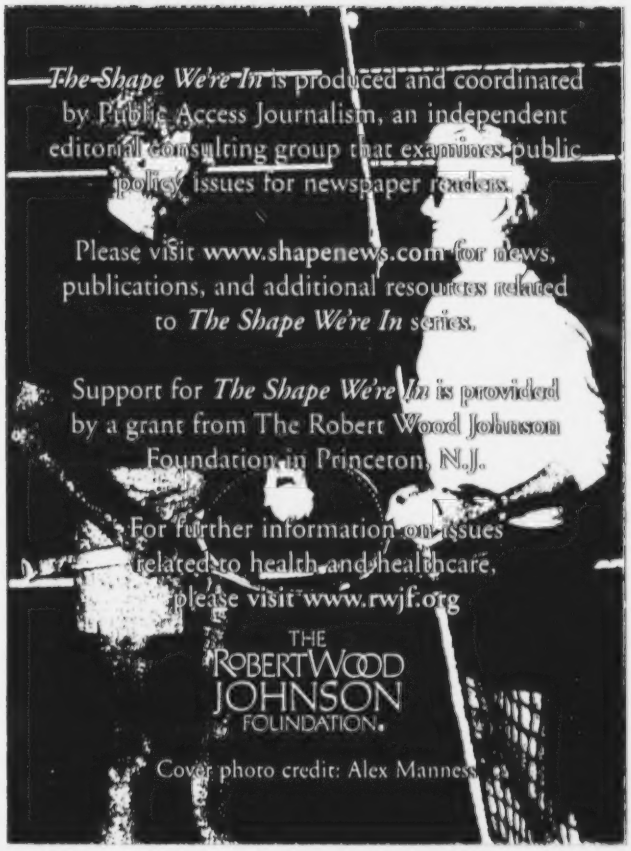
The Shape We're In is produced and coordinated by Public Access Journalism, an independent editorial consulting group that examines public policy issues for newspaper readers.
Please visit www.shapenews.com for news, publications, and additional resources related to *The Shape We're In* series.
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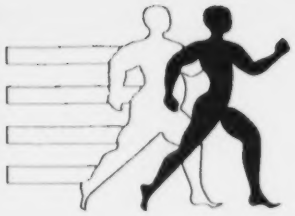

Make Use of This Important Upcoming *NEWSPAPER SERIES* to Increase Awareness About the Connections Between Physical Activity, Obesity and Health in Your Community!

The newspaper series:

Beginning June 2 newspapers across the country have the opportunity to carry a series of articles called ***The Shape We're In***. Distributed at no charge by Knight Ridder/Tribune Information Services to all U.S. newspapers, the five-part series places a media spotlight on physical activity as an antidote to America's obesity crisis. Each article examines factors contributing to the rising number of overweight and obese Americans, including lifestyle, diet and changes in our living environments that have essentially engineered physical activity out of our lives. With compelling personal stories, useful resources and practical ideas in areas such as community design, health care provider services, school programs, public policy activities and corporate trends, the articles are designed to spark dialogue and action in communities throughout the country. ***The Shape We're In*** series provides a window on the issues and, just as important, on effective solutions being implemented across the country.

How your organization can use the series as a launching pad for community action:

The community-based solutions described in the series can serve as a model or as a jumping-off point for creating a unique action plan to raise awareness and address specific needs in your community. To get the most from this newspaper series, use it as an opportunity to look for new partners in your advocacy and outreach efforts — whether you are focused on urban planning and design, public health, community development, transportation, parks and recreation or other goals. Promoting the health benefits of making physical activity a part of everyday life can help your organization achieve its goals and make a difference in your community.

How and when to begin:

Begin now by talking with partner organizations in your community and encourage them to team up with you on activities or initiatives that promote physical activity and address obesity at the local level. As soon as possible, recruit newspapers to run ***The Shape We're In*** series, which becomes available in June — an ideal time to launch a summer community effort. The series serves as the foundation for your action plan, offering both a national perspective and impetus for local action and solutions — ***and*** opportunities for local news coverage. Keep in mind that newspapers are more inclined to run a series when their local communities have a keen interest in the topic. Arrange a meeting with the managing editor, news editor or feature/health section editor of your local newspaper. A small, diverse delegation of two or three articulate people tends to be more persuasive than an individual; whenever possible include representatives from partners in your community. Be prepared with ideas and suggestions that focus on local issues. For example:

- Suggest local stories with community impact that tie in with each article in the series
- Offer experts from your organization and your partners as resources. Tell stories about people you know or who your organization has served to illustrate problems and solutions
- Stress that the stories are written by professional journalists and that they are accompanied by photos and graphics
- Emphasize that the series is distributed for free by Knight Ridder/Tribune Information Services to ***any*** newspaper through KRT's website, and that no Knight Ridder or Tribune Company affiliation is necessary
- Offer to develop directories of local resources; these could be run as sidebars to each article
- Let the editor know that a Spanish version of the entire series will be distributed as well
- Bring a preliminary list of potential local advertisers who can be contacted for ads that relate to the overall theme of the series or to specific series topics
- Use the series as an opportunity to establish or strengthen relationships with newspaper editors and reporters about important local issues which will have residual benefits for you and your programs

Advocacy and Outreach Opportunities:

- Organize a community event in conjunction with the June release of ***The Shape We're In***
- Contact radio and television stations and encourage them to provide related coverage
- Invite your newspaper to provide coverage for your group's event or highlight a successful program
- Plan an event to draw attention to one of the many upcoming national observances, such as National Trails Day, National Bike Month, National Walk to Lunch Day, National Employee Health & Fitness Day or International Walk to School Week
- Collaborate with other local groups to strengthen your outreach efforts
- Reprint part or all of the series in your organization and membership newsletters

THE SERIES

DAY 1 — OVERVIEW: CHANGING THE SHAPE OF AMERICA

Americans are out of shape, and we don't need yet another study to tell us why. Our lives are high in stress and calories and low on free time and physical activity. The good news is that experts in impressive numbers are becoming more and more convinced it's not all our fault. Despite never-ending waves of research proving a proper diet and moderate exercise lead to healthier, longer lives, America as a culture does little more than pay lip service to advancing the crucial cause of physical activity. In fact, over the past 50 years, we've essentially engineered it out of our lives. The car rules. Sidewalks are rare or nonexistent, suburban roads are difficult to navigate on foot. Stores, theaters and restaurants are unreachable without transportation. Computers — in the ever-demanding workplace and at home — keep us glued to our seats. Prosperity has weighed us down. The result is that, "Just Do It" aside, Americans aren't any more active than they were 10 years ago, and we're facing a public health crisis. All of which is forcing what may be a cultural revolution. Ideas to cut obesity that once sounded extreme are gaining public attention and moving into mainstream thinking. For the first time, public health, zoning, transportation, fitness, education, government, law and some business interests are united in determination to stop the runaway train of American obesity and inactivity. Obesity, they say, isn't only caused by that extra Oreo. It is caused by environment — where we live, work and play.

DAY 2 — SCHOOL DAYS: THE STARTING LINE

Nearly half of America's youth, ages 12 to 19, aren't breaking a sweat, opening the door to obesity (in 13 percent of all kids) and diabetes, which have reached epidemic proportions. While good habits start at home, in this case it is schools that are on the firing line. Consider the ubiquitous, revenue-producing vending machines and the content of lunches at many U.S. public schools, which often partner with fast food companies, a $900-billion-a-year industry. Meanwhile, physical education and sports programs are being slashed to meet budgets and mandated education standards. And nutrition is marginally taught, when it's taught at all. The spotlight will focus on the school connection even more in 2003 — kids are becoming the number-one target for public health officials who believe initiatives to help younger generations have the best likelihood of public support, not to mention results. Where are those initiatives? Some health experts, schools and communities aren't waiting for the magic bullet. They've created or borrowed innovative programs that stress starting kids off on the right foot on the long road to lifetime health. And these programs are stripping away the myths about how kids view diet and physical activity.

DAY 3 — MOVING MEALS OUT OF THE FAST LANE

What is the future of fast food? Will our passion for french fries fade as we learn to eat smarter? Will the fast food chains re-invent themselves through menus that an increasingly health-conscious public can live with? Or will we continue to spend billions of dollars a year on food that health experts say is slowly killing us? "People who eat fast food tend to have the high-fat and low-fiber diets we associate with obesity," says Gail Woodward-Lopez, associate director of the Center for Weight and Health at the University of California, Berkeley. "We're not asking anyone in the fast food industry to go out of business. But serving nutritious foods must be given a priority in our culture, just like providing safe clothing or safe buildings." Saddled with slumping sales and worried by the prospect of obesity lawsuits and more government regulation, the industry suddenly finds itself on the defensive. With its dismal record of coming up with healthy alternatives to burgers and fries — remember the McLean Burger and Taco Bell's low-calorie Border Lights line? — the large chains wonder: Do we stick with the Big Macs and Whoppers that brought us where we are, or do we beef up our menus with healthier selections our core customers may not even want?

DAY 4 — THE MEDICAL TREADMILL

With America in the midst of an obesity epidemic linked to an increase in heart disease, high blood pressure, dangerous cholesterol levels, cancer and diabetes, medical schools may finally be waking up to smell the coffee — no sugar, no cream.
Although doctors know better than most how intricately physical activity issues are tied to good health, the topics of weight and physical activity rarely rate a mention in typical diagnoses or treatment plans, much less an emphasis. Why? Consider what the modern physician is up against. The sensitive, overweight pre-teen with self-esteem issues and busy parents who see junk food as a solution, not a problem. The middle-aged working dad with high blood pressure and higher cholesterol and no time for anything but popping a pill. Insurance companies that won't reimburse patients for preventive measures like weight loss and physical activity. And, finally, what many experts say is the crux of the matter — minimal medical training on how to talk to patients to overcome misinformation, embarrassment and lack of motivation. Is there cutting-edge provider training or care that takes into consideration all of these issues? Like all else with physical activity and nutrition, the momentum is building.

DAY 5 — PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

For years, community planners and developers have pushed for "smart growth" to make a dent in America's car culture, hoping to halt seemingly unstoppable traffic congestion and urban sprawl. Architects, landscapers, engineers and designers envisioned a community that would promote "walkability" — sidewalks, walking and biking trails and other enticements that might keep the car in the garage longer. The idea has been slow to catch on, as developers are often reluctant to take on projects that take longer to get approval — and to show profits. There's also been reluctance on the part of suburban residents to allow apartments and retail stores — considered key to the success of any walkable community — into neighborhoods zoned for single-family homes. But emerging data linking a lack of physical activity to obesity will make the call for smart planning more persuasive, and the money will follow, advocates say. It's happened before, they say, with the environmental movement and the fight against Big Tobacco. In each case, "when public health steps in and they suddenly make it all relevant to every human being," momentum builds, says researcher James Emery.

IDEAS FOR LOCAL STORIES & ACTIVITIES

- Look for current public policy initiatives that highlight innovation and encourage newspapers to write a local story
- Compile a listing of community offerings — an "open spaces" guide for people who want to walk, hike, bike
- Enlist the local radio station to host a daily "Let's Get Healthy" minute during morning drive time to encourage listeners to walk up stairs, walk down the block, walk around the building; the hosts could talk about what they're going to do, and even get people to call in and discuss what they're doing
- Find out what the most dangerous intersections are for pedestrian traffic. Pitch to the newspaper on your community's "Ten Most Dangerous Intersections" and offer suggestions for creating positive change

- Enlist local nutritionists to visit schools and demonstrate healthy food choices and portion sizes. Set up a demo table with popular foods — sandwiches, cookies, pizza slices, cut veggies, potato salad, etc., and create sample plates for adults and kids
- Sponsor a local "Walk Your Kids to School" Day or a "Walking School Bus"
- Invite a local expert to the school to talk about community gardens; what kids might plant and healthy recipes using those ingredients. Suggest the newspaper run a story about the community gardens; take photos of the students planting and print the recipes they come up with
- Hold a bike safety rodeo or bicycling marathon, with several top prizes for the winners, t-shirts for everyone, etc.
- Ask your newspaper to take photos or report on innovative physical activity or nutrition classes

- Ask local fast food outlets and delis to identify "healthy fast foods," including main courses and desserts, and profile these in a special newspaper supplement
- Offer a local spokesperson to the radio shows to talk about healthy fast foods
- Pitch the local cable TV station about doing a show on healthy fast foods — set up a demo table showing unhealthy offerings, too, with an expert talking about the differences

- Seek out innovative physical activity programs offered or sponsored by local doctors or hospitals and bring them to the attention of your newspaper or radio station
- Survey local physicians to gather stories of challenges and barriers they face
- Compile a list of "Weight-Loss-Helpers" in your community, with basic info on each — i.e. Weight Watchers, Jenny Craig, local fitness centers, programs at the YMCA or YWCA, weight-loss consultants, etc. Provide the listing to your local newspaper as a sidebar

- With a reporter, take a "walkability" survey of your neighborhood, grading it for accessibility and safety
- Organize several community walks; announce them in the paper and on local radio stations. Pick several simple routes where people can take 15 to 30 minute walks
- Announce a "challenge yourself" program — the first day, walk up a staircase; the next day, do it twice, the next, 3 times, etc. When you've reached your limit, continue at that level once a day, every day

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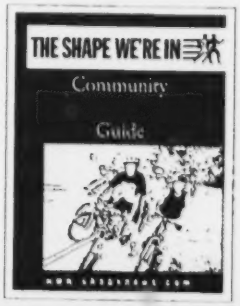

THE SHAPE WE'RE IN

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THE SHAPE WE'RE IN

ABOUT *THE SHAPE WE'RE IN*

The Shape We're In is a national public education initiative supported by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation®. It places a media spotlight on physical activity and obesity to promote public awareness and spark dialogue and action across the country. The centerpiece is a **five-part newspaper series distributed free by Knight Ridder/Tribune (KRT) Information Services on June 2** to newspapers across the United States.

The Shape We're In provides an opportunity for national and community-based organizations focused on urban planning and design, public health, nutrition, community development, transportation, and parks and recreation to incorporate opportunities for increasing physical activity and reducing obesity into their advocacy and outreach efforts. The health benefits of making physical activity and healthy eating part of our daily routines are clear, and we hope this series will help illuminate these important issues. We also hope the series helps advance your organization's goals. We encourage you to use the series and related materials to communicate with your stakeholders. We also urge you to promote the series within your communities and contact regional newspapers to localize the series to encourage dialogue and jump-start public policy action around physical activity and obesity.

Why a newspaper series?

Newspapers bring issues before the public, opinion leaders and policymakers. A newspaper series can explore and explain complex facets of an issue, giving readers much more than a "sound bite" that is quickly forgotten. This series offers editors a welcome jumping-off point to tell local stories. Hundreds of newspapers are expected to carry the series, and national television and radio shows will pick up on the coverage as well. The series can be used to draw attention to one of the many upcoming national commemorations, such as National Trails Day, National Bike Month, National Walk to Lunch Day, National Physical Education Day, National Employee Health and Fitness Day or International Walk to School Week. The articles also will live on in reprints distributed to the public, policymakers and experts, as well as on The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's dedicated Web site at **www.shapenews.com.**

What will it cover?

Each article in the series examines factors contributing to the rising number of obese and overweight Americans, including lifestyle, diet and changes in our living environments that have essentially engineered physical activity out of our lives. By offering compelling personal stories, useful resources and practical tips in areas such as community design, health care provider services, school programs, public policy activity and corporate trends, the series will provide a window on solutions being implemented across the country. *The Shape We're In* will provide common-sense information and user-friendly resources on physical activity and obesity issues for individuals and organizations. We hope that it also will create a demand for change among the American public. A critical element to its success is the cumulative energy generated across the country by the many organizations committed to increasing physical activity and reducing obesity as part of their advocacy and outreach efforts.

Who is producing the series?

The series is produced by Public Access Journalism, an independent editorial consulting company founded by Jane McDonnell, an award-winning journalist with 20 years of experience as a news reporter and editor. She is a former managing editor at Knight Ridder/Tribune Information Services. Financial support for the series comes from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

After surveying diverse groups working to encourage physical activity and reduce obesity, we have selected several examples of community-based activities that work. These suggestions, representing a sampling of the many creative approaches now being implemented across the country, are by no means exhaustive, but provide a starting point for sharing effective strategies that encourage physical activity. Generating action at the grassroots level is one of the most successful ways to spread key messages in a community. Positive change is more likely to occur when communities work together.

The guide begins with suggested strategies for **recruiting your newspaper** to run *The Shape We're In* series and also to provide coverage of local issues and activities. This is followed by three sections that offer **media tools, community-based activities** and **support materials.**

The first section on **media tools** outlines the basic steps for creating media coverage with tips for writing effective news releases, radio spots and public service announcements to enhance newspaper, television and radio coverage.

The second section provides **examples of effective activities** for creating change and promoting healthy lifestyles. Each activity will provide a concrete example of an outreach tool that can be adapted to reach your specific audience(s).

The third section provides **support materials**, including a summary of *The Shape We're In* series and upcoming events that promote and support active living.

For more information, please go to **www.shapenews.com.**

THE SHAPE WE'RE IN

ECRUIT YOUR NEWSPAPER

The key to expanding the reach and impact of ***The Shape We're In*** is to encourage your local and regional newspapers to run the series. The series also provides an opportunity for your organization to receive local and regional news coverage for its programs and initiatives. Editors and reporters need compelling, timely, local content as much as you need coverage of the issues on which you work. Newspapers are more inclined to run a series when their local communities have a keen interest in the topic. Your organization and its representatives can bring credible, first-hand knowledge of physical activity and obesity issues, and their local relevance, to editors and reporters in a persuasive way.

Begin now by talking with other organizations in your community and encourage them to partner with you in activities that promote physical activity and address the obesity crisis in your community. The series serves as the foundation for your action plan, offering both a national perspective and impetus for local action and solutions.

Suggested Action Steps:

MEET WITH EDITORS FROM YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER. There are many opportunities for community involvement around this series; in fact, the newspaper publishers are counting on it. The first step is to visit with your local newspaper editors and make certain that they are aware of the series. Look around your community for logical partners that might join you in promoting the series. A small, diverse delegation of two or three articulate people tends to be more persuasive in such meetings than one individual. Find out the names of the editors and schedule a meeting with them. Offer to work with them to promote the series and let them know that you will be available for interviews and can act as a resource, and will help find local interest angles that will tie in with the series' articles.

KEEP YOUR MESSAGE SIMPLE AND CONCISE. Try to keep your introduction to three or four sentences that will tell the editor why they should be interested in publishing the series. Give more details as the conversation continues, but think of your opening as a way to heighten interest. After you've made your initial introduction, be prepared to answer more specific questions. Know why the series would be of particular interest to the newspaper's readers, and identify the local angle. Have a list of community groups that can provide background and interviews for reporters to use to localize the series. The more resources you can offer, the better your chances of success.

SUGGEST LOCAL STORIES. Be prepared with ideas and suggestions that focus on local issues (see *Pitching Local Stories*), including local statistics on obesity and physical activity. Use the series to establish or strengthen relationships with newspaper editors and reporters about important local initiatives currently underway. These connections will have residual benefits for you and your program. ***The Shape We're In*** will touch on a broad range of topics (see *Series Summary*) -- each of them meaningful and powerful. Remember, what affects readers the most, what stays with them the longest, is an issue that personally touches them or the people they know. Through that personal connection, the story is brought home — and that is value that you can add to ***The Shape We're In*** articles.

DEVELOP DIRECTORIES OF LOCAL RESOURCES. The series represents an opportunity for the many diverse local organizations focused on encouraging healthier lifestyles and active living to come together. Look around your community for logical allies. For example, put together a list of "Weight-Loss Helpers" in your community, with basic information on each — i.e., Weight Watchers®, Jenny Craig®, local fitness centers, programs at the YMCA or YWCA, weight-loss consultants, etc., or compile a list of "healthy fast foods," offered by local fast food outlets and delis, including main courses and desserts. Or put together a supplement (or at least a listing) of what the community offers — an "open spaces" guide for people who want to stroll, walk, hike, bike; include tracks at schools, parks, public gardens, and land trusts with trails. Also note rest spots — picnic tables, park benches, nearby coffee shops, children's playgrounds -- and include indoor options such as indoor tracks and malls that allow for physical activity even in inclement weather.

KEY POINTS TO EMPHASIZE. Many newspapers across the country will be interested in running this groundbreaking series, especially since it will be offered free of charge. ***The Shape We're In*** articles will be distributed by Knight Ridder/Tribune Information Services to ***any*** newspaper through KRT's Web site; no Knight Ridder or Tribune Company affiliation is necessary. KRT is aware of the great need for information on these issues and knows both small and large papers have a tremendous reach within their communities. KRT concluded that cost could be an obstacle to papers' ability to run the series; editors should be made aware that this content, researched and written by professional journalists, is free. The series is also available in "paginated" format — that is, as a pre-published section — ideal for use in a weekly health section. Photographs and related graphics will be supplied along with the articles. You can let the editor know that a Spanish version of the entire series will be distributed as well.

Instructions for Newspapers:

This series will come directly from KRT's wires and online site, complete with photographs, logo, local contacts for reporters and resources for readers. The articles and accompanying photos will be available to any newspaper at no cost on KRT Direct at **www.krtdirect.com/shape** on June 2. Newspapers need not be KRT subscribers to take advantage of this series. KRT will also design, produce and post online a paginated reprint of the entire series.

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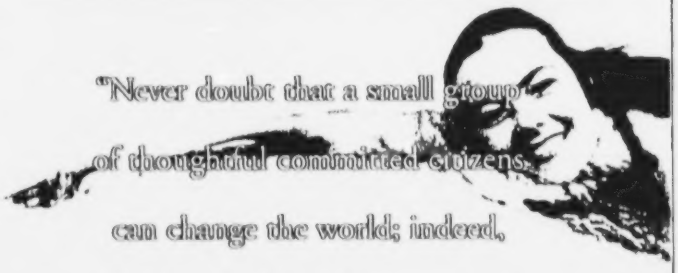
MEDIA TOOLS



"Never doubt that a small group
of thoughtful committed citizens
can change the world; indeed,
it's the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

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GETTING STARTED WITH PROMOTIONS

The media are vital to the success of your local campaign because they can help you get the word out to your target audience(s) and increase participation in the activities you sponsor. They also can help you achieve your larger mission of promoting physical activity and active living in the communities you serve. In many cases, they are the single most-effective conduit for delivering your messages to the people you want to reach.

It is important to set forth a media strategy before making initial contact with a single editor or reporter. You want to make sure that you identify your key audiences, define your messages clearly and concisely, engage the appropriate media outlets for reaching your audiences, and provide the sort of background materials that reporters need and expect. Throughout this guide, we offer tips on engaging the media in your community, templates for writing news releases and op-eds, and advice on partnering with local radio and television outlets.

Here are a few things to think about as you get started with your media outreach efforts.

DEFINE YOUR AUDIENCES — Consider whom you want to reach with your communications. Certain media outlets are better suited for certain audiences. Here are some questions to consider.

- Who have been the primary recipients of your past work? Are there other audiences you want to reach?
- Are there specific groups that need to know more about your project than others? Are there audiences with natural interests in the messages you are trying to promote?
- What audience will be most receptive to your message? A teenage audience may not care very much about improving the number of sidewalks in area neighborhoods, but moms and dads who push strollers or have kids who ride bikes might.

DEFINE YOUR MESSAGE — Before identifying the media you want to reach, define the most important messages you want them to emphasize. Determining the key messages and overall goals of your project will set a sound framework for everything that follows.

- What do you want reporters (and ultimately members of your community) to know? Do you want to raise awareness, call community members to action, or both? Do you want to bring attention to all facets of your programs and activities, or only specific ones?
- Are you prepared to respond to an increased level of interest and inquiries from the audiences you are trying to reach? Do you have adequate staffing? If you have a Web site, is the content current and does it correspond with your media outreach activities?
- Use your own experience to create your message. When you talk about the project to family, friends, and colleagues, what part of it excites you and them most? Focus on the most exciting aspects of your project when defining your message; don't bury your message in details or jargon. There is a world of difference between "This community needs a new bike path and we're going to help build one" and "Our organization has received a grant to begin the planning process for building a new bike path."
- Does your message need to be framed in different ways to effectively reach different audiences? Make sure that you define why specific audiences need to know about your work, and why it is important to them. For example, if your goal is more bike paths in your community, you may want to emphasize one set of points to convince local planning officials to allocate funds, but use a different set of points if you are trying to persuade local residents to get outside and be more active.
- Look for natural news hooks — the involvement of a local celebrity or activities timed around a national day or other local community event (see the list on the next page) — for the activities you may be undertaking. Take advantage of these news hooks to show media outlets that your work is timely and will attract readers, viewers, or listeners.

ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS — Are there other organizations in your community that share goals and activities similar to your own? If so, would it be advantageous to partner with them in reaching media? If you do choose to partner with another group, take the following points into consideration.

- Determine responsibilities. Have a clear plan for who will handle each task.
- Share news lists and contacts.
- Draft news releases and other project materials together and include the names (and logos if feasible) of the partners on media materials.
- Identify common audiences and determine who is best suited to reach out to those audiences.
- Prepare your organization's representatives and your partners to be spokespersons. Do they have experience doing media interviews? Do you have the right spokespersons — are they appealing to the audiences that you want to reach?

USE EXISTING RESOURCES FOR CREATING NEWS MATERIALS — As you begin to create your media outreach strategy, consider the media tools already at your fingertips.

- Customize the news release template included in this guide.
- Draw on materials you have already created to generate content for news releases, op-eds, and other media tools.

NATIONAL EVENTS

You might want to time your media outreach with some of the following national events:

MAY

National Bike Month
www.bikeleague.org/educenter/bikemonth.htm

National High Blood Pressure Education Month
hin.nhlbi.nih.gov/nhbpep_kit/index.htm

National Physical Fitness and Sports Month
www.fitness.gov/may_month_observances.html

National Physical Education Day (5/1)
www.pe4life.org/nationalpeday.php

"All Children Exercise Simultaneously" National Event (5/7 at 10:00 AM)
www.projectaces.com

National Walk to Lunch Day (5/7)
www.americawalks.org/walktolunch/index.htm

World Walking Day (5/8)
www.ivv.org/englishweltwandertag.htm

Tennis Across America Day (5/10)
www.uspta.com/index.cfm/aol/1/MenuItemID/446.htm

National Running & Fitness Week (5/11 – 5/17)
www.americanrunning.org/

National Bike to Work Day (5/16)
www.bikeleague.org/educenter/bikemonth.htm

National Employee Health and Fitness Day (5/21)
www.physicalfitness.org/nehf.html

National Senior Health & Fitness Day (5/28)
www.fitnessday.com/senior/index.htm

JUNE

National Trails Day (6/7)
www.americanhiking.org/events/ntd/

National Men's Health Week (6/9 – 6/15)
www.menshealthweek.org/

JULY

National Recreation and Parks Month
www.nrpa.org/story.cfm?story_id=1251&departmentID=17&publicationID=11

SEPTEMBER

National 5-A-Day Week (9/21 – 9/27)
www.5aday.gov

National Women's Health and Fitness Day (9/24)
www.fitnessday.com/women/index.htm

National Family Health and Fitness Day (9/28)
www.fitnessday.com/family/index.htm

OCTOBER

Healthy Lung Month
www.lungusa.org/healthylungmonth/index.html

International Walk to School Week (10/6 – 10/10)
www.iwalktoschool.org/

Walk to School Day (10/8)
www.walktoschool-usa.org/

NOVEMBER

American Diabetes Month
www.diabetes.org/main/community/outreach/month/default.jsp

World Run Day — The Global Fitness and Charity Challenge (11/19)
www.runday.com/

CREATING MEDIA COVERAGE

The Shape We're In series offers a great opportunity for your program and your community partners to generate media coverage. The projects you undertake will have a natural news hook because they directly affect the communities you serve. Additionally, many active living and physical activity projects carry human-interest angles that are ready-made for local news placements. Below are a few tips that can help you generate local media coverage of your project's activities.

- Know your media. Read, watch, or listen to the media outlets you wish to target ahead of time. Note which reporters are likely to cover your issue. Make sure your issue or organization fits with the reporter's "beat." If you are not sure of which reporters cover your issue, contact the assignment editor. At large newspapers, there are assignment editors for different sections of the paper (e.g., Health, Metro, Business, etc.).

- Help local newspapers carrying *The Shape We're In* series to localize their stories. Provide them with background on your organization's efforts and, if appropriate, make someone within your group, or a member of the community served by your organization, available as an expert on the issues explored in the articles. Remember, media like the local human interest story.

- Reach out to local television and radio reporters to build on the newspaper coverage of the series (see *Connecting with Local Radio and TV Outlets*). Again, offer to assist broadcast coverage of the issues by providing background information, experts, or community members who illustrate the story topics.

- Arrange general information meetings with reporters that cover beats related to your project's work. Brief them on upcoming activities, community members participating in the project, and the project goals and timeline. Stay in contact with reporters, updating them on scheduled events and project achievements.

- Near the release date (June 2) of *The Shape We're In* series, try to place an op-ed (see *Writing an Op-Ed*) in your local daily or neighborhood papers.

- If local citizens play a feature role in your campaign, make sure to emphasize their roles to local newspapers and television and radio news programs. Don't forget school newspapers if your project involves students.

- Consider using alternative media to access hard-to-reach populations. Pursue placements in foreign language newspapers and distribute brochures and leaflets in community centers, churches, and hospitals — wherever people with an interest in your story gather.

- Remember that your organization's newsletter — and those of other local community organizations — is a media outlet, too. Community organizations, neighborhood associations, and parents' groups often publish newsletters for their members. Use these outlets to raise awareness of your local efforts.

- Investigate regional or state e-mail listservs that commonly discuss issues related to your work and include your Web site URL. Post your Web site, information about *The Shape We're In* series, and your project's achievements and upcoming events to the listservs you identify.

WRITING A NEWS RELEASE

A news release detailing your community outreach campaign is a great way to let media and others know about your organization's activities. It is important to have a clear objective for developing a news release. Think through the following questions: What is my news? What result do I expect from this news release (inform, educate, persuade, activate, etc.)? Who would be interested? Why would they care?

Below is a list of basic steps as well as a news release template to help you get started.

Basic Format of a News Release

- Print the release on your organization's letterhead.
- Place the phrase "For Immediate Release" and the date on the upper left margin.
- Below this phrase or on the right margin, place your contact person's name and phone number.
- Compose a short headline that clearly describes the news release content and grabs the reader's attention. Center it in bold type on the page. Place concise secondary subheads in italics below the main headline.
- Begin the first paragraph with your dateline. The dateline identifies where the news originated. For example, "SPOKANE, WA. — *Moving for Life* launched a new program to help seniors get active right in their own neighborhood."
- Put the date, time and other time-critical information related to your activities in the first paragraph. Concisely summarize the facts — who, what, when, where and why — in the first paragraph.
- In the second paragraph, insert a quote from a leader within your organization, such as the executive director or a board member, about the event or program. Be sure to identify the source of all quotes. Make sure that the quote content explains and enhances the story, and that there is a clear relationship between the person quoted and the story. Try to limit the number of quotes to no more than two people.
- Details on the event and the program go in the third paragraph.
- The final paragraph covers basic organizational information, e.g., who you are, history of the event or program. If you have a list of member organizations, sponsors, or other partners, list them in an attachment rather than incorporating that information into the text of the release. This makes it easier for a reporter or editor to review.
- If your release goes beyond one page, type "-more-" at the bottom of the first page. Keep the release to a maximum of two pages, but strive for one.
- At the end of your release, type "###" or "-30-" to indicate the end of the copy.

General Guidelines

- Use short, declarative sentences and double-space the lines. Make sure to use an active verb and the word "today" in your first sentence.
- Avoid the use of jargon and explain any acronyms at their first use, e.g. "The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)…" Avoid "puff" words and phrases such as "exciting," "very large," "monumental," etc. Be as clear and concrete as possible in your descriptions.
- Link the facts of the project or event to an important issue or need in your local community. Using real-life examples helps make the human connection. Highlight benefits of your work to the community.
- Review the release for clarity and flow, and be sure that all words and names are spelled correctly.

NEWS RELEASE TEMPLATE

Use the template below for your own local promotion efforts. To make your release more compelling, add interesting, relevant facts about physical activity in your community. Double-check all facts and statistics for accuracy and indicate the sources from which they are drawn. Insert specific information about your own program in the bracketed areas.

For Immediate Release
[Insert Date]

Contact: [Name]
[Phone Number]

[Name of Program] Kicks-Off Local Initiative to Increase Physical Activity and Reduce Obesity in [Community/City Name]

[Insert planned events, activities and programming planned] Planned in Conjunction with the Release of ***The Shape We're In*** *Newspaper Series*

Your Town and State — [Your organization] announced today the launch of [put specific activity here] around [your specific topic area] in [community name]. The new initiative is part of ***The Shape We're In***, a five-part newspaper series that will focus on physical activity and obesity. The series will appear in newspapers across the country [or insert the name of your paper if you know they plan to run the series] in June 2003.

[Quote from program director or adapt the following quote] "We are very pleased to be active participants in promoting and supporting physical activity in [community name]. Together, [your project] and ***The Shape We're In*** aim to make a real difference in the way the public understands and responds to [your topic area]," says [project leader/director].

In addition to promoting ***The Shape We're In*** newspaper series, [your organization] will [insert planned events, activities and programming planned]. These activities will provide an opportunity for national and [your community] leaders to focus on the links between obesity, urban planning and design, public health, community development, transportation and other factors that contribute to increasing physical activity and reducing obesity.

The need for such an initiative is clear. [Insert statistics specific to your city, state or region here, or use the national language provided.] Seventy percent of Americans do not achieve the Surgeon General's recommendations for physical activity. Thirty percent are sedentary. American communities are facing a chronic disease epidemic — 60 percent of adults are overweight or obese. Health costs from obesity alone were estimated at $117 billion in 2000.

Each article in ***The Shape We're In*** newspaper series will examine factors contributing to the rise in the number of obese and overweight Americans, including lifestyle, diet, and changes in our living environments that have engineered physical activity out of our lives. By offering compelling personal stories, useful resources, and practical tips in areas such as community design, health care provider services, school programs, public policy activities and corporate trends, the series will provide a window on solutions to these challenges that are being implemented in communities across the country. Funding for the series is provided by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

[Insert paragraph that provides essential information about your organization such as when it was founded, the city where it is based, its mission, who it serves, how it is funded, etc. Once written, this paragraph can be cut and pasted into every news release you create.]

Visit [your Web site address] for more information on [your organization's local project]. More information about ***The Shape We're In*** can be found at **www.shapenews.com.**

###

WRITING AN OPINION-EDITORIAL (Op-Ed)

You may choose to write an opinion editorial, or op-ed, and submit it to a local newspaper to strengthen your media outreach campaign around ***The Shape We're In*** series. The op-ed is a powerful vehicle to express your opinion on issues related to physical activity or active living in your community. Op-eds are more effective than a letter to the editor because the length allows greater detail and content control. You might use an op-ed to:

- Applaud a new program that advances your mission and goals.
- Respond to published reports released on the healthiest or most active cities, and comment on why your city is or is not on the list.
- Recognize the national observance days, such as Bike to Work Day, and highlight how your organization's efforts are helping reach the goals behind these celebrations or events (see *Getting Started with Promotions*).
- Recommend or support a public policy or a proposed initiative that you believe will have a positive impact.

Op-ed Questions — Prior to writing an op-ed, answer the following list of questions to ensure that you make the necessary points for an effective piece.

- What is the main opinion or argument you hope to express?
- How does it fit with the messages in your communications plan?
- What is the problem in the community that your organization is solving?
- How does your organization help to solve this problem?
- Describe your organization. How does it work?
- Why wasn't the problem solved before? What's the obstacle?
- Is there a villain in the story?
- What is the cost of the solution you propose?
- How can you "paint a picture" in someone's mind through your words?
- Which community leaders, groups or people in the community agree with you? Why?
- Which community leaders, groups or people in the community disagree with you? Why?
- What is the urgency?
- Who does this affect?
- What is the history of this story? What has been done before? What was the process to get to this point? Was there a cliffhanger or suspenseful event?
- Are the correlating facts that can support the story and strengthen your case?
- What happens next?

General Op-ed Rules — While the op-ed is a great way to express your views on specific issues, there are a few guiding principles when it comes to placing one.

- Generally, op-eds are 800 words or less in length. Before writing an op-ed, contact the op-ed page editor of your local paper for submission policies and guidelines.
- Have an opinion and state it forcefully. An op-ed should argue a point, and the point being made should be stated clearly up front. There needs to be a compelling "hook" to generate interest in the op-ed and demonstrate its relevance to the readers and the community.
- Make your case from the top down. Begin with the premise of your opinion and then back up your opinion with facts. Don't present the facts first and save your opinion for the conclusion.
- Support your case with facts. Attribute your facts to a credible source, e.g. the Surgeon General or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Submit a timely piece. It should relate to something in the news.
- Speak to your target audience using language that every one can understand. Don't use jargon.
- Keep sentences and paragraphs short.
- Offer specific recommendations to address the issues you raise.

CONNECTING WITH LOCAL RADIO AND TV OUTLETS

The Shape We're In series offers you a great opportunity to partner with local radio and TV outlets. Local broadcasters are searching for ways to add rich, local content to the news stories and programs they produce. Often, the best place to start is by contacting the news director. She may refer you to a producer. The news director or producer, and not the program host, typically makes program decisions. Here are a few ways to work with them around your community outreach project.

SPECIAL EVENTS CONNECTED TO *THE SHAPE WE'RE IN* — Approach a local TV and/or radio station about partnering to produce special events and programming around *The Shape We're In* series. The mini-media campaign should begin at the same time your local paper runs the five-part series. You and your partner stations might consider creating news stories on physical activity issues in your community, while simultaneously sponsoring town hall forums, health fairs and other outreach events. The goal of partnering with broadcasters is to extend the value of your outreach efforts and their programming.

EDITORIALS — Many radio stations, especially public radio stations, will reserve spots in their news schedules for community comments on pressing issues. Call the news directors of stations that reach your audiences and request an opportunity to provide editorial comment. Focus on the local issues of your outreach campaign.

PSAs — All of us have seen or heard public service announcements (PSAs) on our local radio and TV stations. They often raise awareness of topics important to viewers and listeners through funny, emotional or compelling 30- to 90-second productions. Contact your local TV and radio stations about producing a PSA for your campaign. In some cases, stations will actually help you produce the pieces.

EXPERT GUESTS — Make available eloquent members of your organization, especially active participants in your projects, available to appear on radio and TV news programs. Drive-time radio broadcasters and morning and evening TV news programs are always in need of local experts who can speak to important local issues. As you know, physical activity, obesity and active living are issues that impact many people, and that broad appeal is attractive to news producers and hosts. Contact program producers and reporters and let them know that you have experts who are ready to contribute.

"PITCHING" LOCAL STORIES

The Shape We're In offers the opportunity to spotlight local angles on the issues presented throughout the series. Familiarize yourself with the series topics (see *Series Summary*) and offer reporters a unique and relevant local story. Local coverage represents a significant opportunity for you and your organization to garner media attention on important issues.

First, Do Your Homework ...

- Find out which newspaper section covers stories like yours and identify the editor(s) for that section.
- Find out how much lead time the newspaper needs to run the series and schedule your meeting before that deadline.
- Research the newspaper's online site or library to determine if it has published stories on topics covered in *The Shape We're In*. Editors will appreciate that you know what the paper already has reported on these issues.
- Before the meeting, sit down with a colleague and rehearse your pitch. Include any community partners who will join you in the meeting.

Once You're in the Door ...

- Keep your message simple and concise. Try to keep your introduction to three or four sentences that will tell the editor why he should be interested in publishing the series. Give more details as the conversation continues, but think of your opening as a way to heighten interest.

After you've made your initial introduction, be prepared to answer more specific questions. Know why the series would be of particular interest to the newspaper's readers. Is there a local hook? An upcoming related event? Have a list of community groups who can provide background and interviews for reporters to use to localize the series. The more resources you can offer, the better your chances of success.

Consider providing local statistics on obesity and physical activity. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers several searchable state-level databases including prevalence rates for obesity, overweight, and time for leisure physical activities at **http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/brfss/Trends/TrendData.asp**, physical activity levels by state at **http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/stats/stats.htm**, or tracking fruit and vegetable consumption at **http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/5ADaySurveillance/**. There's also the Men's Fitness' annual survey of America's Fattest Cities at **http://www.mensfitness.com/mens/superfeat/010203/afc2003.html**

Communications consultant Andy Goodman has compiled some helpful advice from journalists all over the country. More information can be found on his Web site, www.agoodmanonline.com, or by subscribing to his Free-Range Thinking™ newsletter. From the March 2003 issue, some of the key elements to a strong pitch include:

Aim at the Right Person.
Do a little homework — which reporter actually covers your issue? Who has written positive pieces in the past? Whether you are pitching an innovative program or plugging your community event to the local TV news, it never hurts to call the assignment editor or the news desk: they will tell you who is appropriate.

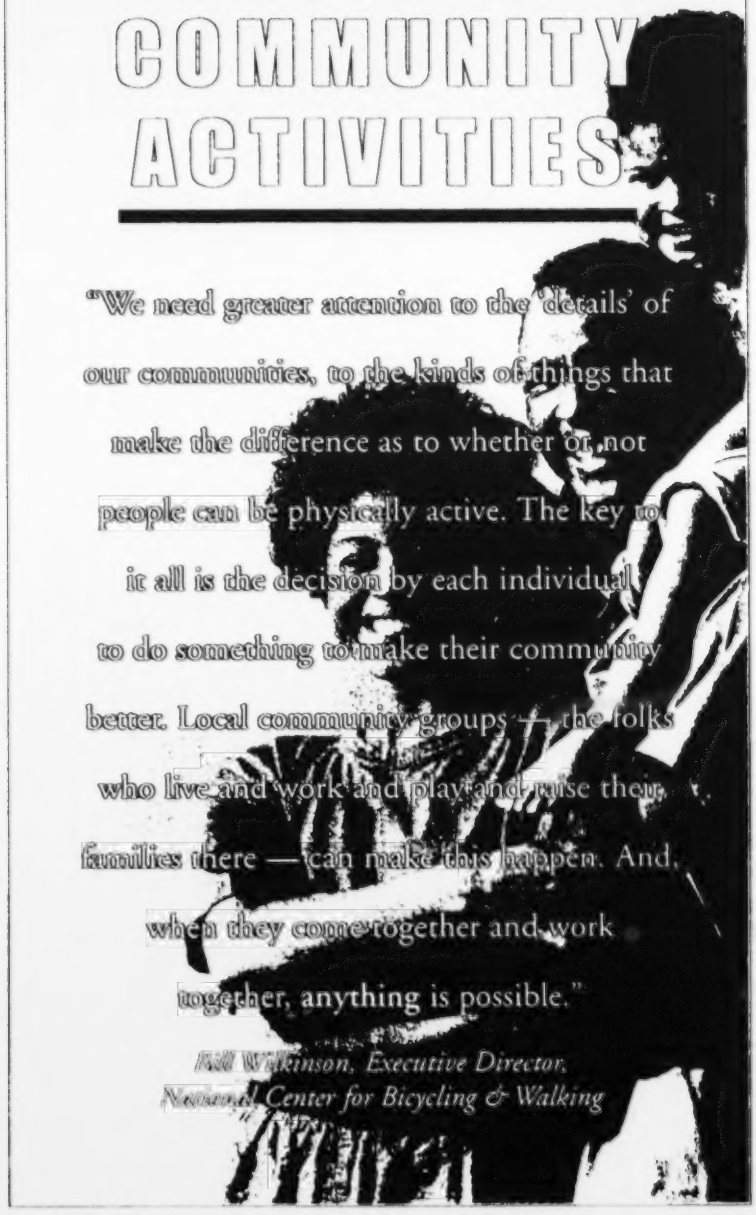
Get to the Point.
A pitch that clearly frames the story idea in the first or second sentence is infinitely more welcome than one that tiptoes up to it, or worse, buries it under paragraphs of phrase-making. In almost every case, reporters know instantly whether an idea will work for them.

Remember, It's a Pitch, Not a Monologue.
Give them enough information up front to pique their interest, but let them interject with questions before too long, certainly within the first 30 seconds.

Give Them Time.
The smartest pitchers tell reporters about things that are happening months before the news peg actually comes up. This allows reporters and sources to work together to figure out when and how a piece would work for a newspaper.

Be a Resource.
The easier you make it for the reporters, the better the chances they'll bite. Be ready to immediately provide quotes, background and interview opportunities. The reporter/pitcher relationship is really pretty simple: You want the reporter to cover your story; in exchange, you help make the reporter's job easier.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES



"We need greater attention to the 'details' of our communities, to the kinds of things that make the difference as to whether or not people can be physically active. The key to it all is the decision by each individual to do something to make their community better. Local community groups — the folks who live and work and play and raise their families there — can make this happen. And, when they come together and work together, anything is possible."

Bill Wilkinson, Executive Director,
National Center for Bicycling & Walking

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The 20% Boost Approach to 10,000 Steps a Day

Introduced by Mark Fenton, Host of PBS's "America's Walking"

GOAL:
To increase walking among participants to meet and exceed the recommended health goal of taking 10,000 steps per day.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS:
- Employers
- Public health sites such as health clinics, community centers, senior centers, etc.
- Schools, as an activity for physical education
- Faith-based communities
- Civic organizations
- Health care providers and insurers

HOW IT WORKS:
The 20% Boost Approach offers a realistic way to build up to 10,000 steps a day, the rough equivalent to the Surgeon General's recommendation to integrate 30 minutes of activity into daily life. Taking 10,000 steps can reduce your risk for disease and help you lead a longer, healthier life. But not everyone should shoot for 10K a day right away. The 20% Boost Program offers a comfortable, gradual approach for increasing walking endurance. All that's required is a pedometer and motivation.

WEEK 1: Measure steps in a typical week without any attempt to walk more than normal. Each morning, reset the pedometer to "0." Set it to show steps (ignore distance and calorie counts). Keep it closed and attached to the front of the waist to the left or right of center. Wear it all day, from the moment you wake up until going to bed, except when immersed in water. At night remove it, record the number of steps taken in a log, and note any formal exercise (wear your pedometer then, too); for example, "20-minute treadmill walk." Also note if anything caused more (museum tour) or fewer (all-day meeting) steps than usual throughout the day. For bicycling, try attaching your pedometer to your shoe for bicycling if it doesn't seem to count your pedal strokes when attached to the waist.

WEEK 2: Boost the average daily steps by 20%. Add the total steps taken in week one and divide by seven. Then multiply by 1.2. The result is the new target number for daily steps. So, if the average was 3,000 steps a day in week one, try for 3,600 a day in week two. How each person reaches the goal is a personal choice. Most physical activity counts, including formal workouts (a brisk walk, using most exercise machines) and informal exercise (taking the stairs instead of the elevator or even pacing on the subway platform).

WEEK 3: If 10,000 steps haven't been reached, or if the goal is substantial weight loss (for which many experts recommend 12,000 to 15,000 steps a day), then boost steps again by 20%. Calculate the second week's daily average and multiply by 1.2. If aerobic fitness is a goal, try boosting the speed of at least 2,000 to 4,000 of the steps already being done.

HOW TO GET IN MORE STEPS:
- Park in the farthest space from your destination if it's safe to do so
- Take a walking break instead of a coffee break at work
- Walk your child to school
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Walk the dog instead of just letting him out in the yard
- Get off the train or subway a stop early
- Hide the remote and get up to change the channel

SUGGESTED ACTION STEPS:
- Ask your employer or the wellness program at your work site to consider making pedometers available to employees (digital pedometers cost about $30, bulk orders over 100 are about $10).
- Meet with faith-based leaders about a "Pledge for Health" collection during worship services to order pedometers for members of the congregation.
- Talk to the school nurse or physical education instructor about ways to integrate walking into the school day.
- Obtain maps of local walking trails and distribute them with the pedometers.
- Organize teams and offer prizes, perhaps from local merchants.

ORGANIZER TALKING POINTS:
- The latest research indicates that 10,000 steps a day is equivalent to the goal of 30 minutes of daily physical activity — the level recommended by the Surgeon General.
- Everyday, we average 3,000 - 5,000 steps in doing our normal activities.
- Results might include lower cholesterol and blood pressure, weight loss, better sleep and more mental alertness.
- Pedometers provide instant feedback.

WHERE TO GET A PEDOMETER?
Pedometers can be found in many sporting goods stores or directly from manufacturers. Yamax digital pedometers, called Digiwalkers, are recognized as one of the most accurate and consistent brands. They can be found in stores as Digiwalkers, or as Accusplit Eagle digital pedometers. Another company, Accusplit, also markets simple but reliable analog pedometers; they are slightly less accurate than the digital devices, but ideal for bulk purchases and as prizes. For direct sales or for bulk pricing, contact:

New Lifestyles: **www.digiwalker.com**
Optimal Health Products: **www.optimalhealthproducts.com**
Accusplit: **www.accusplit.com**

For information about The 20% Boost Approach:
http://www.pbs.org/americaswalking/health/health20percent boost.html

For information about 10,000 steps initiatives:
http://www.shapeup.org/10000steps.html

Sample "Pitch" for a Local Story

For Immediate Release
July 27, 2003

Contact: Becky Smith
Tel.: 555-555-5555
Email: BeckySmith@network.com

Evergreen Elementary School Students Pledge
10,000 Steps a Day to Promote Better Health

Rotary Club Donates 100 Pedometers

SMITHTOWN, GA. — One hundred students at Evergreen Elementary School in Smithtown have volunteered to participate in a health program that is being activated in communities throughout the country. They have pledged to build up to 10,000 steps a day, the rough equivalent of the Surgeon General's recommendation to integrate 30 minutes of activity into daily life. The national incentive, called the 20% Boost Approach, was developed by Mark Fenton, host of PBS's "America's Walking". All that is required is motivation — which these elementary school children have — and pedometers. The Rotary Club has generously offered to purchase and donate 100 pedometers for Evergreen for this program.

"Our children, like kids all over the country, are spending more time in front of their computers and TV sets than they are running around and getting exercise," says Samuel P. Jones, president of the Rotary Club. "We think the 20% Boost Approach is an easy, realistic way to get our kids moving, help them learn some healthy patterns, and fight childhood obesity. We're happy to supply the pedometers to encourage the kids to take those 10,000 steps."

The goal in Week 1 is to measure steps in a typical week without any attempt to walk more than normal. Each morning, the children participating in the program, ages 8 to 12, will reset their pedometers to "0." They wear the pedometers all day long, removing them before they go to bed, and they'll record the number of steps they take throughout the day. (A typical day includes 3,000 -5,000 steps.) In Week 2, their goal is to boost the average daily steps by 20%. In week 3, if 10,000 steps a day haven't been taken, they'll boost the steps again by 20%.

The need is greater than ever, with 15 percent of children ages 6 to 19 overweight and 14 percent of young people reporting no recent physical activity. Walking is a cardiovascular activity. Results may include lower cholesterol and blood pressure, weight loss, better sleep, and increased mental alertness.

"The kids are excited and ready to take on the challenge," says Evergreen Elementary Principal Jacqueline Farrell. "Some of them can walk to school instead of taking the bus; we're giving them options in phys ed that can help them increase their 'steps'; they're going to walk up and down stairs during recess; they are having fun and challenging each other on how to build up to the 10,000 steps. And what I think is most exciting is that we have more kids who want to do the program. We'll start it up again with a new group, fitting them with the pedometers, as soon as the first group reaches its goal."

The 20% Boost Program is also being taken up across the country by offices, health clinics, community centers, senior centers, civic organizations, and faith-based groups, among others. For more information on the program and 10,000 steps, check the Web sites: **www.pbs.org/americaswalking/health/health20percentboost.html** and **www.shapeup.org/10000steps.html.**

###

Walking School Bus

GOAL:
To encourage communities to support children walking to school in groups accompanied by an adult.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS:
- Parents/PTAs
- School personnel
- Police
- Seniors/Senior Centers
- Neighbors/Neighborhood Associations
- Recreation Departments/Community Recreation Centers

HOW IT WORKS:
Each October, millions of children, parents, teachers and community leaders across the globe walk to school to celebrate International Walk to School Day. Walk to School Day can become a catalyst for ongoing efforts to increase walking throughout the year. Daily walking opens everyone's eyes to the need for sidewalks and trails, safe street crossings, more cautious drivers, safe walkers and bicyclists, and even state legislation to fund improvements. The desire to reduce pedestrian and bicyclist injuries, restore childhood mobility, improve basic health, and reduce automobile traffic near schools has inspired a wide variety of programs that share the name "Safe Routes to School." These projects have emerged from concerned communities around the country, sometimes under different names.

The Walking School Bus is one strategy to get kids to walk using a safe, supervised route. It brings together a small group of students with one or more adults on their walks to and from school. Typically, the students live near one another. Even if they already walk to school, the benefit of the Walking School Bus is that it provides a consistent, supervised system in which children can walk to school under the watchful eye of an adult. Interested adults volunteer for the program by signing their name next to where they live on street maps displayed at the local school. Clusters of households are identified and linked. Safe and enjoyable routes are mapped out for the group. They can identify potential problem intersections along the route and monitor them so children can cross safely. The involved adults become part of the problem-solving process in their neighborhood.

SUGGESTED ACTION STEPS:
- **One at a Time.** Find a group of families who live close to each other and ask them to organize a Walking School Bus. This generally results in one Walking School Bus at the school, at least initially.
- **Organize an Interested Persons Meeting.** Organize a meeting with key stakeholders that will include members of the school administration, interested teachers, parents, police and school volunteers. The purpose is to create a common understanding of the purpose of a walking bus, and identify individuals to take responsibility for organizing the effort. It may take several meetings to sort out potential routes, schedules and volunteer "drivers."
- **Network the School.** Survey the school community to gauge interest in joining a Walking School Bus and sort the responses into potential routes. A sample survey can be found at **www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk/resources.htm**. Organize a meeting so people can set the schedule, driver roster and contact person for each Walking School Bus. The contact person acts as the coordinator for new people wishing to join the Walking School Bus.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:
- An outreach and information strategy to reach potential users
- Interested parents on key streets or buildings
- Volunteers to "drive" the bus
- A regular pattern or schedule that a bus "follows"
- Perform a Walkability Checklist for each route (download at **www.walkinginfo.org/walkingchecklist.htm**)
- Parental consent for each student "riding" the bus

ORGANIZER TALKING POINTS:
- Roughly 10% of children nationwide walk to school regularly. Even among those kids living within a mile of their school, only 25% are regular walkers.
- Fewer cars will be on the roads around the school, creating a safer environment for children.
- Gives children a sense of independence while "being a part of a team" walking to school.
- Provides a safe, non-polluting, and convenient alternative for children traveling to and from school.
- Children and adults get exercise and gain the many health benefits of moderate physical activity.
- Children meet their neighbors, each other, and become part of the community instead of viewing it from the back seat of a car.
- Parents gain "extra time" when they don't have to accompany their children to school every day.
- Helps teach children good road sense and safety.

RESOURCES:
Walk to School Day (October 8, 2003)
USA: **www.walktoschool.org**
International: **www.iwalktoschool.org**
United Kingdom: **www.walktoschool.org.uk**
Canada: **www.goforgreen.ca/walktoschool**
California: **http://www.cawalktoschool.com**

KidsWalk-to-School Guide
http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk

Safe Routes to School
National Summary: **http://www.transact.org/report.asp?id=49**
California: **www.dhs.ca.gov/routes2school**
Florida: **http://www.dcp.ufl.edu/centers/trafficsafetyed/swts.htm**
New York: **www.saferoutestoschool.org**
United Kingdom: **www.saferoutestoschools.org.uk/**
Canada: **www.greenestcity.org/indexasrts.html**

Walking School Bus
www.walkingschoolbus.org

Sample News Release

For immediate use
October 1, 2003

Contact: John Ryan
Tel.: 555-555-5555
Email: JohnRyan@network.com

Local Schoolchildren, Parents and Community Leaders to Participate in Walk to School Day on October 8, 2003

GREENVILLE, NY. — The Greenville Elementary School will join schools from around the country to celebrate the seventh annual Walk to School Day on October 8. Last year, more than 600,000 parents, kids and community leaders from 49 states walked to school on that day. The idea is to walk to school together with a purpose — to promote health, safety, physical activity and concern for the environment. Walkers from the U.S. will be joining participants in more than 25 countries around the world to celebrate the third International Walk to School Day.

Nearly 200 students from Greenville Elementary School plan to walk to school that day along with parents, teachers and community leaders including the school superintendent, the mayor, city council members, the chief of police and news anchors from Channel 12.

The event will begin at 7:30 a.m. with kids, parents and community leaders walking from the Courthouse on Main Street to the elementary school. Other special activities associated with the walk include a breakfast gathering at the school, an assembly about pedestrian and bicycle safety and a special presentation given by Greenville's fire chief.

Community sponsors who donated items to support this event include Slater's Grocery, which donated breakfast, and Greenville Silk Screening, which donated free t-shirts for all the walkers. This local event is being organized by Brownie Troop 52 and Cub Scouts Pack 10.

To learn more about Walk to School Day, visit the official Web site at **www.walktoschool.org**.

###

1% or Less Campaigns From Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI)

GOAL:
To reduce saturated fat consumption and heart disease risk by motivating adults and children (over 2 years old) to make one easy but important dietary change: switch from drinking whole or 2% milk to 1% or skim milk.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS:
- Government officials
- Grocery store owners and dairy department managers
- Employers
- Public health sites such as health clinics, community centers, senior centers, etc.
- Teachers
- Faith-based communities
- Civic organizations
- Health care providers and insurers

POSSIBLE ELEMENTS OF THE CAMPAIGN:
- Conduct milk taste-tests in supermarkets, schools, and worksites
- Place signs in the dairy cases of supermarkets that encourage consumers to choose 1% or skim milk
- Organize a speakers bureau to give presentations about the campaign and the importance of nutrition to community organizations
- Hold a news event with local physicians, supermarket representatives and government officials
- Organize nutrition presentations at schools, worksites and civic organizations
- Place messages in church bulletins
- Hold "Pledge for Health" contests between worksites, classes, etc.

ORGANIZER TALKING POINTS:
- Whole milk has as much artery-clogging saturated fat as five strips of bacon, a Snickers® candy bar, or a fast-food hamburger. And 2% milk isn't much better. It is like eating three strips of bacon.
- 1% and skim milk are healthful foods — full of calcium and vitamin D. But in whole and 2% milk those nutrients come with too much saturated fat. And, saturated fat is a major contributor to heart disease — the number-one killer of American men and women.
- The availability of milk in gradations of fat content allows consumers to make a gradual change from whole to skim milk.
- Skim milk has 40% fewer calories than whole milk. 2% milk doesn't meet the federal government's definition of a low-fat food. It's only called "low fat" because Congress gave milk a special exemption from the recent food labeling law.
- 1% and skim milk may taste better than you think. In blind taste tests of over 1,800 people, over 80% liked the taste of skim milk and 95% liked the taste of either 1% or skim milk.
- Fatty build-ups are found in the arteries of kids as young as 10 years old. Those fatty build-ups are the beginnings of heart disease.

To order a comprehensive handbook (cost is $65) for organizing a 1% or Less Campaign, contact:

Center for Science in the Public Interest
1875 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Ste. 300
Washington, DC 20009
Phone: (202) 332-9110
Fax: (202) 265-4954
http://www.cspinet.org/nutrition/1less.htm

Sample Media Advisory

1% or Less: Physicians Say "Switch"

WHEN AND WHERE:	Wednesday, June 4, 2003, 10 a.m. United Hospital Center, Classroom A 3 Hospital Plaza, Route 19 South Clarksburg, W. VA.
WHAT:	West Virginia University and the United Hospital Center will hold a news conference to give an update on the progress of the 1% or Less Campaign and a preview of what is in store for the remaining three weeks. Physicians from West Virginia University, United Hospital Center, and the Veterans Administration Medical Center will urge the residents of Clarksburg and Bridgeport to protect their health and reduce their risk of heart disease by switching to 1% or skim milk. The relationship between milk and heart disease and the age at which to switch kids to low-fat milk also will be covered. 1% or Less is an intensive media campaign that encourages consumers to make one important change to protect their health and reduce their risk of heart disease: to switch from whole and 2% milk to 1% or skim milk. The advertising is supplemented by community programs such as taste tests in supermarkets, and outreach programs in worksites, schools, churches, and service organizations.
WHO:	Dr. Phillip Smith, campaign director and physician representatives from West Virginia University, United Hospital Center, and the Veterans Administration Medical Center will speak at the news conference.
CONTACT:	John Smith (555) 555-5555

Walkability Checklist From the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center

GOAL:
This useful tool can help you answer the question "How walkable is your community?"

POTENTIAL PARTNERS:
- Neighbors
- Elected leaders, Town Planning Board, Police, Department of Public Works, and other government officials
- Schools
- Faith-based communities
- Civic organizations

HOW IT WORKS:
The checklist is provided free of charge from the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center and can be downloaded at **http://www.walkinginfo.org/walkingchecklist.htm.**
- Pick a place to walk, preferably with a child, and use this checklist to decide if your neighborhood is a friendly place to walk.
- Read over the checklist before you go, and as you walk, note the location of things you would like to change.
- At the end of your walk, give each question a rating.
- Add up the numbers to see how you rated your walk overall.

SUGGESTED ACTION STEPS:
- Take your results and write an op-ed or a letter to the mayor or town planning board.
- Tell local traffic engineering or public works department about specific problems and provide a copy of the check list — emphasize that pedestrian-friendly communities are places with a high quality of life, often translating into increased property values, business growth and increased tourism.
- Speak up at town board meetings or petition the city or town for walkways and gather neighborhood signatures. Let them know that with more people walking, communities experience reduced traffic demands, improved air quality and greater physical fitness.
- Trim trees or bushes that block the street and ask your neighbors to do the same.
- Encourage schools to teach walking safely and to start safe walking programs.
- Ask neighbors to keep dogs leashed or fenced and report scary dogs to the animal control department.
- Organize a neighborhood speed-watch program and request increased police enforcement.
- Organize a community clean-up or tree-planting day.
- Submit a comment or idea on-line **(http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/reauthorization/)** to the US Department of Transportation as it prepares reauthorization of the nation's surface transportation programs through the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21).

RESOURCES:

Pedestrian Safety
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Traffic Safety Programs
www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/ped
National SAFE KIDS Campaign
www.safekids.org

Walking and Health
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity
www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/index.htm
www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk/index.htm
Prevention Magazine
www.itsallaboutprevention.com
Shape Up America!
www.shapeup.org

Walking Coalitions
America Walks
www.americawalks.org
Partnership for a Walkable America
www.nsc.org/walkable.htm

Walking and Bicycling Information
Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center (PBIC)
www.pedbikeinfo.org; www.walkinginfo.org
National Center for Bicycling and Walking Campaign to Make America Walkable
www.bikefed.org

Walk to School Day (October 8, 2003)
USA event: **www.walktoschool-usa.org**
International: **www.iwalktoschool.org**

Street Design and Traffic Calming
Federal Highway Administration Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Research Program
www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/index.htm
Institute of Transportation Engineers
www.ite.org
Surface Transportation Policy Project
www.transact.org
Transportation for Livable Communities
www.tlcnetwork.org

Accessible Sidewalks
US Access Board
www.access-board.gov

Sample Op-Ed

I admit it: I don't walk enough. But now it's harder for me to come up with excuses. My blissful ignorance ended when, as head of the PTA at Smith School in Grand Falls, I was put in charge of our upcoming Walk to School Day.

To prepare myself for the task, I did some research. I was surprised to learn that only 10 percent of children nationwide walk to school regularly. And only 25 percent of those kids who live within a mile of their schools are regular walkers.

This, despite the fact that walking is one of the easiest, simplest, and most versatile forms of physical activity available. It's also a great way to spend time with our children, get to know our neighbors and see our community up close.

To figure out why more of us in Grand Falls aren't out strolling, I walked my 6-year-old son to Smith School last week. To help with my research, I brought along a Walkability Checklist that I downloaded on the Internet at **www.walkinginfo.org.** The checklist encourages residents to pay attention to their surroundings — including traffic, safety and sidewalk characteristics — to determine just how "walker friendly" their communities are.

Here's what I found out about my neighborhood.

We have too many fast drivers and too much heavy traffic, making it nearly impossible to walk safely, especially where our kids are concerned. At most crosswalks, the white paint meant to alert drivers to pedestrians was faded, leaving motorists with little warning that people might step out onto the street. At busy intersections, hurried drivers often turned left long after the light had gone red on their end. An unsuspecting walker easily could have crossed into the street and landed in the hospital.

From time to time, we were forced to walk in the streets because cars parked in driveways had blocked off the sidewalks; or we walked on lawns to avoid tripping on the deeply chipped and damaged cement sidewalks.

We encountered other hindrances unrelated to traffic issues. As we approached Smith School, my son noticed there were empty soda cans scattered along the sidewalk, but no trash can to toss them in after he'd picked them up. And while I was surprised to find more kids than I expected walking to school, it concerned me that most were traveling alone, rather than in the safety of groups.

Walking my son to school and really seeing how my surroundings discouraged walking at first overwhelmed me. But after more research, I went into action, alerting friends and neighbors to sign on to help with a campaign.

We asked the city to upgrade nearby crosswalks with fresh coats of paint. To make crosswalks in busy areas stand out, we asked that signs and small orange flags be set up to alert approaching drivers to slow down and yield the right-of-way to pedestrians. The city also is considering putting more money into placing trash cans along our streets to encourage people to pick up after themselves.

Our neighborhood is now deciding whether to create an "adopt a street" program to encourage everyone to take an hour a week to pick up litter or to sponsor beautification or tree-planting days.

And, to ensure that no child walks to school alone, we've petitioned Smith School to create buddy systems and expand the hours of crossing guard shifts at busy intersections to assist the kids who get to school early, as well as the stragglers.

You can play a role in making our city a more walkable, healthy and safe place to live. Encourage our city leaders to support initiatives designed to make areas safer and more attractive for walkers. Educate your children to walk safely as they travel to school and around the neighborhood. Most of all, organize your neighbors and local merchants to take a "walkability" challenge.

You'll be surprised by what you find.

###

Pedestrian Cross Walk Action From Feet First, Seattle WA

GOAL:
To draw attention to a dangerous crossing, spark public awareness and educate drivers about pedestrian safety and cross walk laws in an effort to create safe environments for walking.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS:
- Neighborhood associations
- Chambers of commerce
- Civic organizations
- Police and fire departments
- Schools
- Walking clubs
- Disability advocates

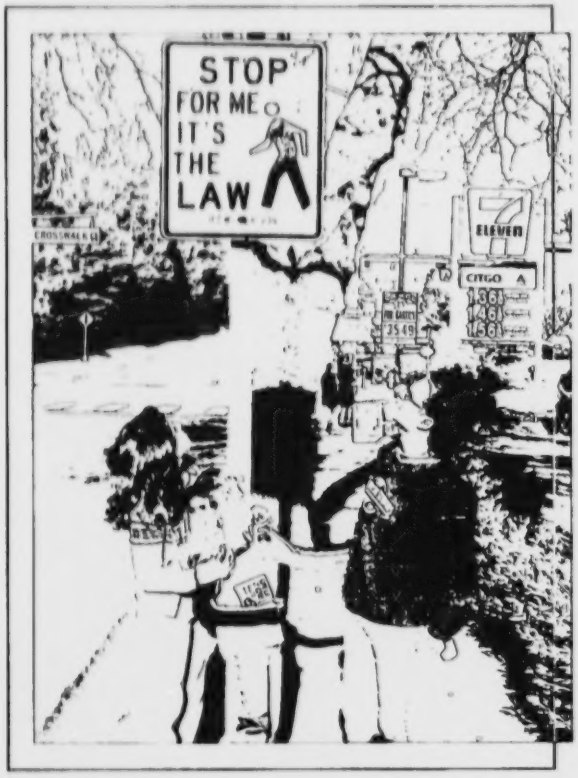
HOW IT WORKS:
A Pedestrian Cross Walk Action is an organized event in which a group of pedestrians repeatedly cross a street in marked and/or unmarked cross walks in a legal fashion, so as to communicate messages to drivers, pedestrians, media representatives and other observers. Members of the organized group carry signs with educational and advocacy messages. Cross walk actions can involve as few as 10 or more than 40 people, but sufficient numbers are required to communicate the messages with strength and diversity. When you're out in numbers, crossing the street becomes a political statement. A Cross Walk Action brings together people concerned about pedestrian safety, rights, and transportation priorities.
Overall, you need to set aside 4 to 16 hours to successfully plan a cross walk action. This depends upon how extensively you plan and promote the event, the size of the crowd you're expecting, and the remoteness of the location.

SUGGESTED ACTION STEPS:
- Select a location
- Reach out to adjacent residents and businesses
- Recruit participants
- Choose a day and time
- Create and organize your materials
- Know the state and local cross walk laws and pass this information out to motorists
- Create a contact list for relevant services
- Write a news advisory and/or public service announcement

For the complete "How to Conduct a Pedestrian Cross Walk Action" go to: www.scn.org/feetfirst

Sample Public Service Announcement

Feet First, the Puget Sound Pedestrian Advocacy organization, and residents of Seattle's Eastlake and Roanoke neighborhoods will conduct a "Pedestrian Cross Walk Action" on Tuesday, July 15, 2003 to highlight the need for safety improvements to the streets and sidewalks in these neighborhoods. This action comes less than two weeks after 36-year old Susie Stephens was struck and killed crossing the street while working in St. Louis. Susie was a long time pedestrian and bicycling advocate in Washington State. Chris Leman, board member of the Eastlake Community Council said, "I knew Susie Stephens and feel this effort to spotlight pedestrian safety concerns is a great way to memorialize her." In the year 2002, there were 88 pedestrian fatalities in Washington State alone. For more information, call John Smith at 555-5555.



GOAL:
Provide mountain bike outings and environmental education for kids from low-income or inner-city neighborhoods who would not otherwise have these opportunities.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS:
- Boys and Girls clubs, YMCA's and YWCA's
- Bicycling shops
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters
- Homeless shelters
- After-school programs
- Schools for the blind and/or deaf
- Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts
- Law enforcement programs
- Churches

HOW IT WORKS:
Trips for Kids (TFK) is a national non-profit organization that provides the materials, moral support and inspiration that an individual or group needs in order to start a Trips for Kids chapter. Based on the proven successful Trips for Kids Model Program in Marin County, California, TFK chapters organize rides, coordinate volunteers, and provide equipment and supervision for local rides, usually involving 6-10 kids at a time. TFK will provide technical support in:
- Applying for 501(c)(3) status
- Obtaining equipment donations such as helmets and bikes
- Obtaining insurance
- Board recruitment and development
- Fundraising, such as grantwriting and holding events
- Finding local resources

Becoming a chapter usually takes approximately four to eight months. This depends on a variety of factors. Several things that speed up the process include having 501(c)(3) non-profit status, a committed group of volunteers and local resources for equipment. Once non-profit status is obtained, TFK will provide a Starter Kit of five bikes (donated by REI), helmets and first-aid kits to each new chapter.

For more information on how to start a local Trips for Kids chapter, contact:

Corry Wagner, National Program Director
Trips for Kids National
138 Sunnyside Avenue
Mill Valley, CA 94941
415-459-2817
www.tripsforkids.org
email: tfknatl@pacbell.net

Sample Radio "Pitch"

Twenty Lucky Kids Head Out for La Sal Mountain Biking Trip

What: Children from the Trips for Kids Shiprock chapter will head to Moab to spend the day with Rim Tours. These 20 lucky kids will have the chance to spend a day on a true adventure with their friends and experience first hand the beauty and the thrill of mountain biking in the La Sal Mountains. Rim Tours is generously providing guides to make the event possible. The ride will consist of a shuttle to 10,000 feet and then a beautiful ride through Dark Canyon.

When: The ride begins at 10 a.m. on August 15.

Spokespeople: "The kids will be in great hands with Ron Smith as a guide," says Matt Hebberd, co-owner of Rim Tours. "He will teach them the skills they need to maneuver their bikes over this terrain." Hebberd, co-owner of Rim Tours, has known Marilyn Price, director/founder of Trips for Kids, for over twenty years and shows his support of the national expansion program by giving the kids the chance to experience something outside of their daily lives.

Trips for Kids is a national organization with 27 chapters across the United States. The goal of the organization is to provide low-income and inner-city kids with a mountain biking experience; a chance to experience the natural world and to challenge themselves to their physical limit are two added benefits of the program.

For information on the Moab ride, please contact Matt Hebberd, at 800-626-7335. For information on joining the ride as a news guest, or information on Trips for Kids National, please contact Corry Wagner at 415-459-2817.

Please consider an interview with Corry Wagner, National Program Director for TFK, and Matt Hebberd, co-owner of Rim Tours. You may want to discuss:

- How schools, recreation programs, and churches can connect with Trips for Kids, what TFK offers, and what the local community is contributing
- What is involved in mountain biking, and what the kids can expect to do and see on their trip
- Plans for the other trips and how to get involved in TFK

Pace Car Program From David Engwicht Communications

Goal:
Through citizen participation, residents and the city work together in calming traffic on all streets, city or neighborhood wide, while minimizing the need for physical "engineering devices" to slow traffic.

Potential Partners:
- Neighborhood groups
- Police
- Government officials
- Local businesses
- Civic organization
- Chambers of Commerce
- Schools

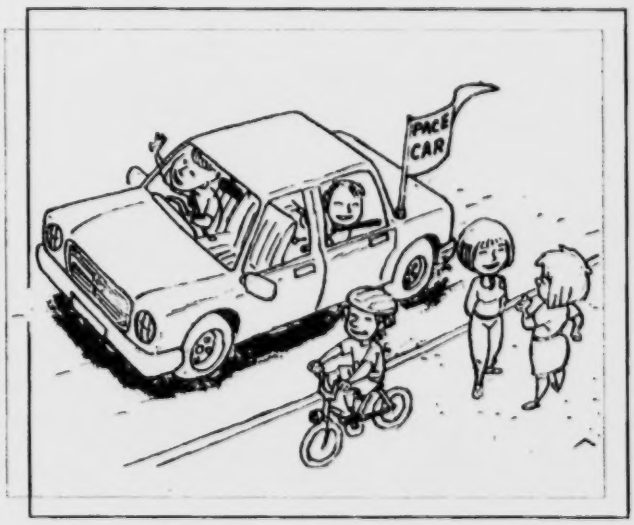
How it Works:
The Pace Car Program, originating in Australia and introduced to the United States in Boise, Idaho, is currently being implemented in many cities throughout the country. The idea is ingenious and simple: *it uses cars to calm cars, merely by encouraging motorists to abide by existing laws* and promoting safe and courteous driving. The two elements of this program are a bumper sticker and a pledge. Motorists are asked to sign a pledge and implement it into their driving habits and lifestyles. A bumper sticker identifies them as a pace car driver. As a pace car driver, residents and their neighbors become "mobile speed humps." If they drive within the speed limit, the cars behind them would do the same. The central core of this program is that it puts the responsibility to drive safely on motorists.

Suggested Action Steps:
- Meet with officials from your local Department of Transportation and Police Department to discuss how to implement a Pace Car Program in your community.
- Offer to speak about the Pace Car Program at a Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce, etc.
- Identify people who are willing to drive the speed limit and are not afraid to put a Pace Car Sticker on their car. These are people who can lead by example.

Organizer Talking Points:
- The Pace Car Program encourages drivers to drive the legal speed limit on neighborhood streets.
- A child's risk of being killed when hit by a vehicle traveling at 30 mph is about 40 percent. A child's risk of being killed when hit by a vehicle traveling at 40 mph is 80 percent.
- The Pace Car Program may save the community real dollars by reducing the amount of money that would be spent on traffic calming measures such as speed bumps, curb bulges and traffic circles.
- The program can free up police officers by reducing the need for them to respond to complaints regarding speeding traffic through neighborhoods.
- As drivers slow down and plan ahead for their car trips, it can help reduce both driver stress and road rage.
- The Pace Car Program empowers people to calm traffic on residential streets and around schools dramatically, immediately, and free of charge.

Cities with Pace Car Programs:
Mesa, AZ: **http://www.ci.mesa.az.us/transportation/pace_car.asp**
Atlanta, GA: **http://www.peds.org/prog_pace.htm**
Boise City, ID: **http://www.idahosmartgrowth.org/pacecar.htm**
Missoula, MT: **http://www.missoula-neighborhoods.org/**
Salt Lake City, UT: **http://www.ci.slc.ut.us/transportation/TrafficManagement/PACECAR.HTM**

In California:
San Carlos: **http://www.ci.san-carlos.ca.us/is/display/0,1124,deptid-18_isid-2232,00.html**
Santa Cruz: **http://www.ci.santa-cruz.ca.us/pw/npcp/npcp.html**
Los Gatos and Monte Sereno: **http://www.losgatospeds.org/**
Palo Alto: **http://www.city.palo-alto.ca.us/ntcp/pacecar.html**
Capitola: **http://www.capitolawalks.org/pacecar/index.shtml**



Sample Flyer

SAN CARLOS POLICE DEPARTMENT

600 Elm Street
San Carlos, CA 94070

Telephone (650) 802-4277
FAX (650) 595-3049

DRIVERS WANTED

The San Carlos Police Department is seeking volunteers to participate in their innovative Neighborhood Pace Car program. Drivers take a pledge to obey all the "rules of the road" including the speed limit, seatbelt use, stop signs and pedestrian right of ways. While driving during your day-to-day activities, you will be able to make a difference in your neighborhood and community.

If you are interested in participating, pick up a pledge form at the San Carlos Police Department, Chamber of Commerce, Youth Center or Senior Center. Sign the pledge and drop it off at the San Carlos Police Department or mail it to us and you will receive your Pace Car sticker. You can also find us on the Web where you will find the program description and pledge form. All you have to do is fill out the pledge form and mail or fax it to us.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call (802-4277) or stop by the Police Department (600 Elm St.)

NEIGHBORHOOD PACE CAR

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SUMMARY OF *THE SHAPE WE'RE IN* SERIES

Each story in *The Shape We're In* will detail factors that influence the alarming rise in obesity and physical inactivity in America, and explore new ideas, policies and programs to change the status quo. Accompanying each story will be a sidebar or sidebars containing tips, resources and "do-it-yourself" guides for readers. The summaries below provide a snapshot of the series.

Overview: Changing the Shape of America

Americans are out of shape, and we don't need yet another study to tell us why. Our lives are high in stress and calories and low on free time and physical activity. The good news is that experts in impressive numbers are becoming more and more convinced it's not all our fault. Despite never-ending waves of research proving a proper diet and moderate exercise lead to healthier, longer lives, America as a culture does little more than pay lip service to advancing the crucial cause of physical activity. In fact, over the past 50 years, we've essentially engineered it out of our lives. The car rules. Sidewalks are rare or nonexistent, suburban roads are difficult to navigate on foot. Stores, theaters and restaurants are unreachable without transportation. Computers — in the ever-demanding workplace and at home — keep us glued to our seats. Prosperity has weighed us down. The result is that, "Just Do It" aside, Americans aren't any more active than they were 10 years ago, and we're facing a public health crisis.

All of which is forcing what may be a cultural revolution. Ideas to cut obesity that once sounded extreme are gaining public attention and moving into mainstream thinking. For the first time, public health, zoning, transportation, fitness, education, government, law and some business interests are united in determination to stop the runaway train of American obesity and inactivity. Obesity, they say, isn't only caused by that extra Oreo. It is caused by environment — where we live, work and play.

- **Sidebar:** Do-it-Yourself Guide: The 10,000 Steps program.
- **Sidebar:** Old ideas vs. new: Seven inter-linked plans, ideas and programs that can change society into one where active living and healthier eating is promoted and supported.
- **Sidebar:** Worldwide, 750 million adults are overweight and 300 million more are obese, and the International Obesity Taskforce believes powerful societal changes are the main cause.

—Reported and written by Ellen Creager, a reporter with the Detroit Free Press

School days: The starting line

Nearly half of America's youth, ages 12 to 19, aren't breaking a sweat, opening the door to obesity (in 13 percent of all kids) and diabetes, which have reached epidemic proportions. While good habits start at home, in this case it is schools that are on the firing line. Consider the ubiquitous, revenue-producing vending machines and the content of lunches at many U.S. public schools, which often partner with fast food companies, a $900-billion-a-year industry. Meanwhile, physical education and sports programs are being slashed to meet budgets and mandated education standards. And nutrition is marginally taught, when it's taught at all.

The spotlight will focus on the school connection even more in 2003 — kids are becoming the number-one target for public health officials who believe initiatives to help younger generations have the best likelihood of public support, not to mention results. Where are those initiatives? Some health experts, schools and communities aren't waiting for the magic bullet. They've created or borrowed innovative programs that stress starting kids off on the right foot on the long road to lifetime health. And these programs are stripping away the myths about how kids view diet and physical activity.

- **Sidebar:** Do-it-Yourself Guide: The Walking School Bus.
- **Sidebar:** How a health teacher and students at a California high school took on a school vending machine contract — and won.

—Reported and written by Lorna Collier, a freelance writer for the Chicago Tribune

Moving meals out of the fast lane

What is the future of fast food? Will our passion for french fries fade as we learn to eat smarter? Will the fast food chains re-invent themselves through menus that an increasingly health-conscious public can live with? Or will we continue to spend billions of dollars a year on food that health experts say is slowly killing us? "People who eat fast food tend to have the high-fat and low-fiber diets we associate with obesity," says Gail Woodward-Lopez, associate director of the Center for Weight and Health at the University of California, Berkeley. "We're not asking anyone in the fast food industry to go out of business. But serving nutritious foods must be given a priority in our culture, just like providing safe clothing or safe buildings."

Saddled with slumping sales and worried by the prospect of obesity lawsuits and more government regulation, the industry suddenly finds itself on the defensive. With its dismal record of coming up with healthy alternatives to burgers and fries — remember the McLean Burger and Taco Bell's low-calorie Border Lights line? — the large chains wonder: Do we stick with the Big Macs and Whoppers that brought us where we are, or do we beef up our menus with healthier selections our core customers may not even want?

- **Sidebar:** Follow a family devoted to fast food fare to see if they can find happiness — and better health — with just-as-fast, but lower-fat alternatives (with chart detailing nutritional breakdown of each).

—Reported and written by Patrick May, a reporter with the San Jose Mercury News

The medical treadmill

With America in the midst of an obesity epidemic linked to an increase in heart disease, high blood pressure, dangerous cholesterol levels, cancer and diabetes, medical schools may finally be waking up to smell the coffee -- no sugar, no cream.

Although doctors know better than most how intricately physical activity issues are tied to good health, the topics of weight and physical activity rarely rate a mention in typical diagnoses or treatment plans, much less an emphasis. Why? Consider what the modern physician is up against. The sensitive, overweight pre-teen with self-esteem issues and busy parents who see junk food as a solution, not a problem. The middle-aged working dad with high blood pressure and higher cholesterol and no time for anything but popping a pill. Insurance companies that won't reimburse patients for preventive measures like weight loss and physical activity. And, finally, what many experts say is the crux of the matter — minimal medical training on how to talk to patients to overcome misinformation, embarrassment and lack of motivation. Is there cutting-edge provider training or care that takes into consideration all of these issues? Like all else with physical activity and nutrition, the momentum is building.

- **Sidebar:** Do-it-Yourself Guide: Tackling weight in the examination room. Two sets of tips -- one for patients, the other for the doctors who treat them — on how to get the most fitness and nutrition mileage out of medical visits.
- **Sidebar:** A simple metabolic test is one new tool in nutrition and exercise treatment that may become as common in the doctor's office as a stethoscope and blood pressure cuffs.

—Reported and written by Lauralee Ortiz, a freelance writer for the Chicago Tribune

Planning for a 'smart' future

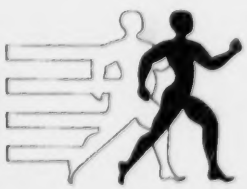
For years, community planners and developers have pushed for "smart growth" to make a dent in America's car culture, hoping to halt seemingly unstoppable traffic congestion and urban sprawl. Architects, landscapers, engineers and designers envisioned a community that would promote "walkability" — sidewalks, walking and biking trails and other enticements that might keep the car in the garage longer. The idea has been slow to catch on, as developers are often reluctant to take on projects that take longer to get approval — and to show profits. There's also been reluctance on the part of suburban residents to allow apartments and retail stores — considered key to the success of any walkable community — into neighborhoods zoned for single-family homes.

But emerging data linking a lack of physical activity to obesity will make the call for smart planning more persuasive, and the money will follow, advocates say. It's happened before, they say, with the environmental movement and the fight against Big Tobacco. In each case, "when public health steps in and they suddenly make it all relevant to every human being," momentum builds, says researcher James Emery.

- **Sidebar:** Do-it-Yourself Guide: Take a Walkability Survey of your community.
- **Sidebar:** A month after "Wray Walks the World" began, the citizens of a tiny town in Colorado had walked enough miles to circle the globe, and moved on to walking to the moon. And they did it without fancy paths, perfect sidewalks, or a Starbucks down the street.

—Reported and written by Nora Macaluso, a freelance writer and former Bloomberg editor

THE SHAPE WE'RE IN



UPCOMING CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

MAY

International Conference on Walking in the 21st Century (5/1 – 5/3)
http://www.americawalks.org/walk21/index.htm

3rd National Congress of Pedestrian Advocates (5/1 – 5/4)
http://americawalks.org/congress/

American Institute of Architects Annual Convention and Exposition (5/8 – 5/10)
www.aiaconvention.com

National Scenic Byways Conference (5/18 – 5/21)
www.byways.org

21st National Conference on Health Education and Health Promotion (5/21 – 5/23)
http://www.astdhpphe.org/21national.asp

Environmental Design Research Association Annual Conference (5/21 – 5/25)
http://home.telepath.com/~edra/home.html

Annual Bike/Walk New Hampshire Conference (5/22)
http://webster.state.nh.us/dot/nhbikeped/index.htm

2003 Summer Senior Olympics (5/26 – 6/9)
www.nationalseniorgames.org

American College of Sports Medicine Conference (5/28 – 5/31)
http://www.acsm.org/meetings/annualmeeting.htm

JUNE

Bicycle Education Leaders Conference (6/4 – 6/6)
http://www.bikeleague.org/events/educonference.htm

National Conference of Mayors Annual Meeting (6/5 – 6/10)
www.mayors.org

Society for Prevention Research Annual Meeting (6/12 – 6/14)
http://www.preventionresearch.org/meeting.html

Congress for New Urbanism XI (6/19 – 6/22)
www.cnu.org

Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals Professional Development Series (6/22 – 6/24)
www.apbp.org

International Trails and Greenways Conference (6/26 – 6/29)
http://www.railtrails.org/traillink2003/default.asp

JULY

Transportation Research Board 2nd Urban Streets Symposium (7/28 – 7/30)
http://gulliver.trb.org/conferences/USS2/

SEPTEMBER

Mid America Trails and Greenways Conference (9/21 – 9/24)
http://www.indygreenways.org/conference/

International City/County Management Association Annual Conference (9/21 – 9/24)
http://www1.icma.org/main/bc.asp?bcid=112&ssid1=47&ssid2=304

Latino Behavioral Health Institute Conference (9/23 – 9/25)
http://www.lbhi.org/2003conference.html

OCTOBER

International Conference on Urban Health (10/15 – 10/18)
http://www.isuh.org/conference.html

DECEMBER

International Council on Active Aging Annual Conference (12/4 – 12/6)
http://www.icaa.cc/calendarofevents.htm

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